





ORIGINALITY.

BY
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"Veritas nunquam perit."

— Seneca.



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ORIGINALITY.

THIS world makes progress by originality. It writes its story by the hand, till Faust gives it the printing-press to strike off pages by the million. It drags its merchandise through mud and mire, till Stevenson turns out the locomotive engine. It sends its news by some slow-footed messenger, till Morse extends the wire, annihilating distance.

Tramp, tramp over the rocks we go, still moving in a circle, till some Bacon, Newton, Faraday, steps out of the circle, and tells us how to shun the rocks. Millions march, but make no progress. They

plow, sow, reap, hew, forge, and build : it is the same dull story — furrow in the same old furrow ; song on the same old key-note ; driving a treadmill ; grinding corn, like Samson, blinded.

Then comes up a thinker, and the world advances by originality. Not by repetition, not by imitation, not by chance, nor accident, but by originality ; and if there be no originality, then there is no advancement. Indeed, our civilization is but the aggregate, the sum-total, the representative of originality.

To what do you owe the mirror before which you tied your cravat, your bonnet strings, to come to this assembly ? Why, to the pulsation of some original brain, transmuting sand and soda into glass, as far back as the days of Nineveh. Whence the clock that told you when to come ? From an original thought of some dreamer in the eleventh century. Whence the bank-bill that bought the

clock? From an Italian banker who invented paper currency. Whence the seat you sit upon? Well, from a bright idea of some antediluvian, out of which there sprang a hand-saw; from another, out of which there sprang a fore-plane; and from another still, which made the combination.

All these common things around you sprang—as Minerva out of the head of Jupiter—from originality. But if these, then certainly those works which indicate on a grander scale our progress. The temple of our civilization has arisen by successive contributions of original thought. It has been many centuries ascending; but must you not on every column, cornice, frieze and architrave of the resplendent edifice, inscribe —

“ORIGINALITY?”

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, you live on brains — this hour, of course, excepted —

and those that live the latest live the longest. You assemble here by Grecian, Roman, Saxon, Celtic, Yankee brains: one idea materialized in a coin, another in a coat, another in a bonnet—decidedly original—another in this instrument of music, and another in this noble edifice. So, as I said, successive brains have made our civilization.

Take another instance. Until the seventeenth century, Aristotle was the prime philosopher. As late as 1621, the Parliament of France forbade, under pain of death, the teaching of any but his philosophy.*

By the syllogism Aristotle would reveal the secrets of the universe. "Assume a point," said he; "then by the syllogism prove it." Well, try this. Men, by Darwin's theory, are well-developed monkeys.

* *En 1621, il rendit un arrêt de mort contre ceux qui enseignaient quelque chose de contraire à la doctrine d'Aristote.* *Histoire de France, par Bonnechese. Tome 1, p. 487.*

You are a man; *ergo*, a well-developed monkey. Do you gain anything by this reasoning? Why, after you have caught your monkey — man — a bonnet or bank-bill will do it — you set your syllogistic trap for him. Yet for centuries philosophers used no other trap. But Francis Bacon came, and changed all this. “Note the facts in the case,” said he; “find monkeys coming to the plane of men, then by induction step to your conclusion.”

By this inductive system Newton unlocked the secrets of the rolling orbs above you. Priestley, Davy, Linnæus and Galvani, the secrets of the rolling globe below you. By it Helmholtz, Tyndal, Thompson, and the other leaders in the kingdom of intellect, now explain the mysteries of this resplendent *Cosmos*.

By it your bright-eyed sister Susie, when she is not whispering, learns her “*Parlez-vous-Français*” and music lesson in the school-room. So you see the world rolls

onward by originality. This is the *norma progrediendi*.

II.

BUT what is originality? A celestial benison indeed; but limited. In one sense, genius the most brilliant cannot originate. You cannot create, you cannot annihilate an atom of material substance. The wit of this whole world combined could not originate the tip of a nightingale's wing. You may change this sheet of paper in an instant over this blaze into carbon, oxygen, hydrogen and potassa; but then the original particles remain in weight and shape the very same. Sir Humphrey Davy discovered, he did not create, the metallic bases.

You cannot originate, you cannot abrogate the law by which such changes are effected. You may decompose rock-salt, if you can find no better business, into

chlorine, sodium and oxygen; you may combine and recombine the particles, but the law that binds them you can never make nor break. Manipulation you may vary; but the mode of combination, that is, the law, is changeless. The salt that Julius Cæsar tasted was made by the same law as that which seasoned your beefsteak for dinner to-day—if you had the good luck to get it; I had not.

Nature's mandates stand irrevocable.

But you have power to originate thought? Politely, I say "Never!" Nothing on this line is original, unless it be original sin; and some think that a plagiarism. You cannot originate thought, much less the laws of thought.

"But did not Homer create the Iliad?"

No. He merely put together. He composed his glorious epic out of sieges, battles, heroes, gods and goddesses—some of them very mean ones—images and pictures pre-existing in his mind. Of such

material he made up his immortal poem, just as the Duke of Wellington out of a promiscuous throng of soldiers made up the grand army that shivered Bonaparte at Waterloo.

“But Dante certainly created his Inferno?”

Never. The scenes, the circles, the fire and brimstone were familiar to his wild imagination from his boyhood. Virgil, Lucian had descended into hell before him. He brought up no more than he took down with him.

“But did not Shakespeare create his masterly ‘Midsummer Night’s Dream?’”

By no means. He just took “the dead heads” of history, shot through them the electric flashes of his wit, raised them from oblivion to sing and dance again, and so constructed that, and all the rest of his immortal dramas. He tells us how he did it.

The poet’s eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;

And, as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.

Midsummer Night's Dream. Act. 5, Scene 1.

“But did not a Grecian artist create that
‘statue which enchants the world,’ the
Venus dei Medici?”

Oh no! He took, they say, from this fair
girl a brow, from this a lip—what dainty
picking!—from this a hand, from this a
foot; and so, out of these rare materials—
he might have found them all before me—
he made up his grand masterpiece.

“But did not Michael Angelo create St.
Peter's Church at Rome?”

He had no power to do it. He took the
old Pantheon for the dome—the very best
of it—some Grecian architect might have
taken that from an Indian hovel; the
Indian that from some inverted drinking-
bowl; and some Egyptian potter that
from an inverted acorn shell.

“But Handel must have created his original oratorio, the Messiah?”

He composed it. The musicians have the word: *componere, compositum*; “to put together.” The tones of music, the canons of music, are as ancient as the morning stars. By the touch of genius, Handel brought forth the “linked sweetness long drawn out,” from that golden fountain to which every one of you has free and open access.

Through five curious portals germs of thought are ever crowding in upon your minds. They come as images, pictures, notions and ideas. You work them over as the painter colors; selecting, blending and combining, and so producing by the law of beauty, if you can, an Iliad, a cathedral, or an oratorio. Your brain is just brim full of these ideas. By thinking, you call forward this or that, as the magician from the pack his cards; you combine, or separate, arrange and beautify: but create

an original thought from nothing, you never did; you never will. *Ex nihilo nihil fit.*

"In what, then, consists originality?" Well, not in the act of creating, any way: but in making new combinations; new adaptations and arrangements; new drapery; new coloring and new presentation. This holds, I think, in every art; in every science, through and through.

Archimedes, for example, made the demonstration of the forty-seventh proposition in geometry. The square, the triangle, the hypotenuse—the elements of the truth he had already. So, combining them anew and noting the relations, he hit his mark and cried "Eureka!" like a madman.

His originality was in putting lines and angles to each other in an unexpected way, observing how they are related, and then drawing his conclusion.

Is it not so?

Raphael painted "The Transfiguration

of our Saviour." His originality was in bringing heads he met with on the Roman Corso into right position, and giving them the proper coloring.

The ladies had from Elias Howe the splendid present of the sewing-machine. The mechanical powers, the thread, the needle were already in his possession. In his pinching poverty—it is just glorious to be poor, if you have the brains to go with it!—he put this and that together: sent a needle through a bit of cloth; made a loop before he brought it back again; and cried in tears of joy, "Eureka!"

The world went one stitch forward.

Daniel Webster was an original orator; not because he coined new words or had new truths to enunciate, but because he used the old so grandly.

Thomas Nast is an original designer; not for making coals and gridirons, but for suspending innocent politicians over them so gingerly. Wouldn't you like to hang

there? Then why are you so greedy for an office?

Who, then, is the originator? In the higher sense, God only. In a lower sense, the poet, artist, orator, inventor, to be sure: but also any one who puts two sticks together in a new and better way than known before.

He who invented paper set the world along; but he, also, who suggested that an envelope, a bed-quilt, or a bucket, or a bustle might be made of it, was acting in the same direction.

Macbeth evinces grand inventive power; but the mad poet's line —

Now twilight lets her curtain down,
And pins it with a star,

is as original as anything in Shakespeare, and helps the world along; for, "a vision of beauty is an eternal inheritance."

So when one reduces several words into a point, as, "Telegram," for a telegraphic

dispatch ; "Hub of the universe," for what Boston thinks of itself ; "Almighty dollar," for what you are all tramping after ; or tells you how to better make a shoe, or lock a door, or grind a knife, or tie a knot, or drive a nail, or point a pin, is an originator, and, so far as that new combination goes, a civilizer of mankind.

III.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, it has no doubt occurred to you that one original step leads to another step ; one summit reached reveals another summit ; one note struck awakens livelier notes, and so on, as the old arithmetic has it, till the time of judgment.

Galileo, for example, said the air had weight ; his pupil, Torricelli, then invented the barometer to weigh it. This led to the invention of the air-pump ; this to the discovery of the laws of fluids ; this

to Ferrel's law of motion to the right, and so on till our signal service now foretells the storm or sunshine two or three days in advance of time.

So a Grecian shepherd drew a string across a hollow box. He struck it with a stick, and listened to the tone it gave. A Roman thinker made a better box, added another string, and called the instrument a cithara. A Spaniard changed it to a guitar; a Frenchman to a spinet; an Italian to a harpsichord; then a German to a piano; then a Yankee to a grand piano. What comes next?

Take another instance. Playing with amber, which he called electron, Plato saw, one day, that little bits of iron clung to it. A trivial thing, yet one step forward. This power Gioja used in 1260 to guide a ship across the Mediterranean Sea. In 1746 a thinker in the town of Leyden found that he could bottle it up like whiskey; and one will knock your brains out

just about as quick as the other. Six years later Franklin, by the combination of a kite-string and a key, showed its identity with the gleaming thunder-bolt; Morse made it a courier for your thought across the continent; Field, across the sea.

And there was no more sea! — *Rev.* 21: 1.

IV.

SINCE, then, one original combination leads to other combinations; since thinkers, from the earliest times, have been making them and recording them; and since our civilization is but the result of them, it follows that the world has ever been achieving progress, and that every successive age has had more "vantage ground" than that preceding it.

As yon majestic river now rolls gently through the fertile plains, now rushes through the mountain gorges, now disap-

pears, now flashes into sight again, yet swift or slow, tends ever towards the ocean, so the tide of civilization, the resultant of originality, has been, whether seen or unseen, slow or rapid, ever bearing towards perfection. As Mr. Whittier has well said:

And step by step, since time began,
We see the steady gain of man.

Egypt received the wisdom of Phenicia and augmented it. Greece took what Egypt knew, sped along the line of art, and passed her learning over to the Romans, who enriched it by their civil polity.

Did the light of genius then expire beneath the battle-axe of Goth and Vandal?

No. Boëthius wrote his sweet *Consolation of Philosophy*, St. Augustine his trumpet-tongued *City of God*, while Ossian, far away in Erin, sang his melancholy

song. Some dreamer, then, in Germany gave the world a saw-mill. It might have been better for it at that period than the song.

Haroun-al-Raschid in the East, Charlemagne in the West, had each the world's old wisdom, and increased it.

But was there anything achieved in the so-called "dark ages?"

Yes, indeed; original brains were working, sparks were flying, and the world was moving.

"In the revolution of ten centuries," says Gibbon, "not a single discovery was made to exalt the dignity or promote the happiness of mankind."

It is an abominable lie! Ferocity, bigotry, I know there was: enough of it; and some of it came down to Gibbon.

No discovery!

Why, from those "dark ages," reaching, as Henry Hallam says, from A. D. 500 to A. D. 1500, came the use of clocks, cotton

paper, gunpowder, the spinning-wheel and the mariner's compass. From those "dark ages" came the *Arabian Nights* you love so well to read ; *Jerusalem, the Golden*, of St. Bernard ; the legends from which Chaucer framed his *Fairie Tales* ; Shakespeare, some of his immortal dramas, and Dante his angel-voiced Beatrice. From those "dark ages" came the grand Gothic style of architecture ; the world-renowned Oxford University ; the Arabic numerals by which you count your greenbacks ; the bank where you deposit them. From those "dark ages" came the splendid science of algebra ; the musical gamut, do, re, mi ; the church organ and the church-going bell. From those "dark ages" sprang the symbols of chemistry and that grand idea, re-advanced by Faraday, that all the metallic bases, gold, silver, iron, tin, zinc, etc., are themselves compound, and that the simple elements which make up this stupendous universe are only THREE !

It is the habit of historians to decry the mediæval period.

Assuming what is false, they use the syllogism :

“Men make no progress in darkness. Darkness overspread that period, *ergo*, no progress.” Why, ladies and gentlemen, the printing-press came out of those “dark ages,” and Columbus gained his first idea of another continent from the dark-age navigators.

By originality this world, from the start, has, age by age, been developing its resources and adding pearl after pearl to the diadem of its wisdom. Its movement has been sometimes like a spiral—slower, sometimes quicker; sometimes artistic, sometimes philosophic; but this or that way, ever onward, upward, from a lower to a higher plane.

The past golden age is, therefore, but a mere poetic fiction—the Arcadian felicity; but an idle dreamer’s dream. That the

ancients had the best of life, or art, or learning, is a sheer illusion.

Mr. Wendell Phillips gives us a lamentable story of the "Lost Arts," as if the world were, under some points, retrogressing. Well, accepting even the fibs of the old historians, the lost arts do not amount to much. The ancients never had many arts to lose.

Suppose they did make glass—anneal it. They had not the wit to use it for a mirror, or to light to any extent their houses by it. We now spin it into threads as fine and flexible as gossamer, and weave it into shawls and dresses, glittering with all the colors of the rainbow.

Suppose, as Mr. Phillips says, they had the microscope, the telescope. They made no useful revelations by them.

Suppose they could embalm dead bodies. But of what utility? What is a dead body good for?

Pliny says: "I have seen a chariot and

two horses that could be hid under the wing of a house-fly." Well, Pliny told great stories; but admit it. What is the use of such a bauble?

Suppose Rawlinson did find a mathematical treatise on a brick at Nineveh; of what value is it? Why, there is more of mathematics on one page your brother John studies in school to-day, than has come out of all the exhumed cities of the Orient.

Allow the Tyrian purple—which was scarlet—to have been lost. I am glad it is lost. No lady here would be willing to appear in it. We have a hundred aniline dyes more brilliant.

What if the Roman dentist could plug teeth with gold? We can extract and then put in whole sets of them while you are dreaming of the one you love best.

I know we cannot make a Damascus blade. But how long would Cæsar wink before a seven-shooter?

Suppose they did construct substantial works of masonry. The *Cloaca maxima* attests it. But what, think you, would a Roman engineer have said of putting a seven-mile bore, entirely through an Alpine barrier of solid rock, and of taking Pompey's legions through it beneath the avalanche, from flank to flank, as quick as he could swallow a dish of Lucrine oysters?

What if the Egyptians did construct a steamboat? There is not a particle of evidence that they ever put steam into it. As to their having railways, who believes it?

Mr. Phillips desires the press not to report his lecture, and you see the reason. I am willing to have mine printed.

There were more of the marvels of art displayed at our late Centennial Exhibition than in the ancient world for twenty centuries.

I grant that the Greeks and Romans manifested genius in eloquence, poetry,

sculpture, architecture, though not much in music, or in painting ; but in all those arts which make our homes happy and our nation glorious, they were twenty hundred years behind us.

For one, I think their æsthetical productions vastly overestimated. Our fathers lauded them ; we reëcho the laudation.

The periods of Demosthenes yield in Titanic force to the double-compact sentences of Daniel Webster. Mr. Phillips himself has sometimes spoken more eloquently than Cicero. Homer never rises to the sublimity of John Milton.

"A good reader," says Mr. Emerson, "may nestle into Plato's brain ; beyond the horizon of Shakespeare, I cannot go."

Try the *Antigone* of Sophocles, the finest of the Grecian tragedies, on the stage of the Boston Theatre to-morrow night ; then try *Hamlet*. You will see where the dramatic power is, and where the people are.

There is no ancient melody of the sea so musical as —

Rocked in the cradle of the deep,
I lay me down in peace to sleep,

by Mrs. Emma Willard.

There is nothing, Greek or Latin, so weird and fanciful as Edgar Allan Poe's *Song of the Raven*:—

Once, upon a midnight dreary,
As I pondered, weak and weary.

There is no old poem so grandly imitative as Tennyson's *Bell Song*, where you so distinctly hear the swing of the iron tongue, knocking out the hours of the night:—

Ring in the valiant man and free !
The larger heart, the kindlier hand ;
Ring out the darkness from the land ;
Ring in the Christ that is to be !

No martial strains can be found in the whole range of ancient poetry, which has the clarion peal of that upon the shaft at Gettysburg :—

On Fame's eternal camping-ground
Their silent tents are spread ;
And Glory guards, with solemn round,
The bivouac of the dead.

No eulogy of olden times ever equalled that pronounced by Abraham Lincoln at the raising of that shaft.

No Greek or Roman artist ever made the canvas speak like Raphael ; no singer ever sang like Mendelssohn.

Our English literature enshrines the civilization of the Old World and the New ; but the New World is the song world, the Christ world, the wonder world, the wide-awake world, and Amherst is a part of it. Are you not glad you are in it ? Well, do not abuse it !

But as to the industrial arts, the Greeks

and Romans stand, in spite of Mr. Phillips' eloquence, as little children, in the presence of the age we live in.

Look at printing. Messrs. Rand & Avery can strike off with their fifty presses three hundred thousand pages in a day. It would have taken a Roman scribe ten thousand days to write as much, and then it might have puzzled you to read it. But Messrs. Rand & Avery are now outdone. Types are now set by steam, and by the solar process, copies struck off as fast as the sun can shine.

Look at the textile fabrics. Tell me how many Roman matrons, with the distaff in hand, it would take to match the spinning jennies of Lowell.

Look at navigation. Who would care to step from the stately Cunarder, with its splendid drawing-rooms and rapid speed, into the rickety cock-boat that carried Cæsar?

Look at house-building. Mr. Phillips

speaks of the house of Tiberius Cæsar on the Palatine Hill at Rome. I have visited it many times ; have dropped pebble-stones into the well to test its depth ; and there is not a gentleman here that would take that house as a gift for his wife to live in, unless he wanted to be a widower ; and it would not take long for that.

I studied well the ruins of Pompeii buried by an eruption of Vesuvius, A. D. 79, and saw something of civilization as it was in the days of Pliny. Though the remains are wonderful, I saw nothing that would give a modern mechanic any new idea. With all their "lost arts" and their known arts, those old pagans had no word for "comfort ;" and we live, ladies and gentlemen, if we live as we ought to live, as much in one day as they did in fifty.

Why, just suppose some lady here spending a day or two at Rome with me, when Rome was in its glory.

I would like one that can walk fast, talk

fast, tell an acanthus from a periwinkle, and with a temper as sweet as mine is sour.

Now please consider, my dear madam, how you would enjoy the visit. Roll up the curtain of two thousand years! We are in the home of Cicero—for the sake of Wellesley College, I will call it *Kikero*—on the Palatine Hill.

There opposite, you see the Capitol; below, the forum, very beautiful; there, the circus; there, the Tarpeian Rock, where you may kill yourself when you get tired of me.

Now let us look at the situation.

On rising in the morning, your little feet rest on cold marble slabs; carpets are something yet to come. No stockings cover your tender feet; these articles are not sold in Rome: they are modern comforts. The forgeries of Chatterton were detected by the verse—

She said, as her white hands white hosen were knitting,
“What pleasure it is to be married!”

which he made Rowley put into his tragedy of *Ella*, feigned to have been written before hosen were invented. Well, not a pin is to be found in all the house to fasten your dress together. Pins came later.

No glass windows admit the light upon your beauty ; no glass mirrors reflect it to yourself. There is no chimney, even, to conduct the smoke away. This is to try your temper. Well, come to breakfast. What, no tea, no coffee, no sugar? No ; these luxuries are unknown. But Cicero lives well. Here is venison. Where are the knives and forks to take it with? Forks! The Romans never saw one. Cicero holds the only knife at the table and cuts, you see, the meat in pieces just to suit the mouth of the recipient. So your little mouth, I regret to see, gets but a scanty breakfast. You take these raw oysters with your delicate fingers. How delicious!

Do you decide to stay? Well, spinning

wool upon a distaff with the orator's daughter Julia, is your employment. All pretty enough in poetry. But look around the house. There is no lounge or sofa to relieve your weariness; no rocking-chair to woo you into slumber. No watch or clock to tell you the time for dinner; no magazine to amuse your fancy after it; no photographs to recall your loved ones; no stereopticon to bring the distant world before you.

But you are musical. Hark! Instead of Chickering's grand piano you hear an old cithara, something like a banjo, striking out tunes rough enough to set your teeth on edge.

Oh, the lost arts! You are alive to-day because they are lost.

Well, look a moment into the grand orator's library. Not a single printed book! Just see them! Piles on piles of rolls, tied up like music-holders. Open one of them. It is a hundred feet in

length and commences:—*Quousque tandem abutere, Catilina, patientia nostra?*

But perhaps you would now like to indite a letter to your lover. Then sit down upon that tripod, take the orator's pen—a stick of wood. He calls it a stylus—take that bit of sheepskin; write. What gracious sentences! Now tie your precious letter up with another bit of sheepskin. Seal it. Will you send it by the mail? There is no mail. Servetus, Cicero's slave, will take it to its destination; and then, ah me! You wait so long for a responsive bit of sheepskin, unless your lover chance to come himself, and then you have, for aught I know, a sheep's head! Yes, my dear madam, on the Palatine Hill, in the home of the noblest of the Roman orators—a rose-bush now marks the spot—you would move through marble halls, and have nude sculptured forms enough around you; but ere a single day had passed, you would be glad to

exchange a Parian goddess for a good pair of worsted stockings, and your song would be:—

'Mid pleasures and palaces, though we may roam,
Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home.

Grandeur, sumptuosity, those magnates of that era had; but those ten thousand articles and arrangements which make the wheels of modern life turn as on golden axles, they never saw. For why? Because the world advances slowly, steadily, by originality. It then had come up to a certain point; no more. The level was two thousand years below us. The "lost arts" were there.

But thinkers kept on thinking. Every successive age contributed something—this a windmill, this a penknife, this a compass, this a printing-press, this a paper-mill, this a water-pump, this a power-loom, this a locomotive engine, this an ocean telegraph, this a telephone, this an electric

light—to the general stock. We are now rejoicing in this accumulated brain-work, the “lost arts” to the contrary, notwithstanding.

V.

BUT have we attained perfection? No; not in any way. Some hundred years to come it will be said of us, “They were barbarians!” Something has been done; but we have as yet hardly entered the outer vestibule of the sanctuary of science.

To say nothing of the unresolved problems of the stellar system, of the origin of the species, of the secret of force, of the constitution of the elements of matter, or of the mechanism of the mind, over which things many brains are aching, there are myriads of questions to be settled, notions to be exploded, inventions to be made, arts to be set forward, principles to be elucidated, and victories to be won.

Take medicine. Physicians enough; but which of them can tell you why this man dies of a cancer, this of a consumption; or knows if his prescription is to kill or cure you?

Take law. What is it, far too often, but a net to take the little rogues in and let the great rogues out?

Take theology. Can you count the roads it lays open into heaven?

Take music. Have we drawn but a single cupful from the brimming ocean? Is not something grander than the strains of Handel yet to entrance the world?

Take the woman question. Can anybody tell what is to be done with her?

Take costume. Is that lady who visited old Rome with me quite satisfied with her "love of a bonnet," her pannier and her high-heeled boots?

Perfection!

We have done but just enough to show us what is to be done. Why, the time is

not far distant when the education we now pursue will be but "a scholastic curiosity;" the sermons we now preach will be as dead as door nails; the literature we now laud, the pabulum of some mousing antiquary; the costume we now use—dare you think what will be said of it?

If at some old folks' concert in those coming days, the ladies should appear in our present style, with the curls, the crimpings, the flounces and the furbelows, the cry would break from every tongue:

"Well, there were 'fixings' in those days; there were 'surroundings;' but where was the woman of the period!"

But there has been marching in double-quick time during the last half century. Invention and improvement have with magical rapidity followed invention and improvement, so that a new order of things, a new style of life has come; and thus advancing, must not the world soon have its heat from the hydrogen and

oxygen of the ocean; its light from electricity, its motive power from the atmosphere, its thought made visible as it is engendered, and its communication between all the people instantaneous?

Must not man's dominion over nature soon come to be a royal dominion, and he himself rise to be, not just a little higher than the apes, but just a little lower than the angels?

I hear grand trumpet-tones now breaking over the hill-tops and proclaiming this; I see bright evangel faces beaming from the clear blue sky and beckoning onwards.

VI.

BUT how are we to rise? I answer, By originality. By making new and better combinations and arrangements.

But what is the secret of originality? Well, first, there must be aspiration. This comes from inspiration, which is from

above: as when ten thousand tongues and instruments were pealing forth the grandest strains of his *Creation*, Haydn rose, and pointing upward, said :

“It comes from there !”

How, then? By thinking. “By patient thought,” said Newton. By earnest thinking. It is this that brings the Apollo Belvedere from the block of marble. It is this that sends the locomotive engine thundering on its conquering way. It is this that puts the nitro-glycerine through the backbone of the mountain. Original men are intense thinkers. Newton was so smitten with “the wild delight of thinking” that he once took the tip of the forefinger of his lady-love to put out the fire in his tobacco pipe. “The brute !” you say ; but he was bringing *brutum fulmen* from the heavens.

Byron used to sit whole nights in the shrouds of the ship, rapt in the brilliant creations of his own genius. Webster

sometimes thought so intensely over his grand arguments that his brow became as cold as marble. Neither a Macbeth nor a barometer comes by accident. Millions had played with soap-bubbles; Newton mixed in a little brain with them, and so came out the germ of those wonderful discoveries that enable you to detect the metallic elements of the sun to-day.

It was because Galvani had been studying electron that he saw in the twitching of the dead frog's leg the science that couples the nations by the telegraph. "By intense study, revising and re-revising," said Mr. Whittier to me, "I wrote *Barbara Frietchie*." "I had the fever a long time burning in my own brain," said Mr. Longfellow, "ere I let my hero take it. *Evangeline* is so easy for you to read, because it was so hard for me to write." The battery must be charged before the sparks will fly. The apple strikes your head in vain, unless your thought grasps

hold of it, and makes it tell the story of terrestrial gravitation. Thinking, then, is the second point; what next? I answer, Independent thinking. This is so rare that you call an ordinary man attempting it, original. Most men are mere copyists of other men's copy, copied a thousand times before. You see that I am one of them. All I claim is being an honest thief.

"What does my minister believe? Tell me; then I'll say what I believe."

"Did Addison spell phthisic with a ph and a th?" Yes. "Then I will spell it so."

"Does Mr. Darwin think my great grandfather was a baboon?" Yes. "Then I am of the same opinion."

Perhaps your neighbors are.

"Does Queen Victoria wear a pound of powdered jute upon her head?" Yes. "Then fix up mine."

"Does Mr. Phillips say the Roman dandy drank his sherry-cobbler?" To be sure he does. "Then let me have a straw."

“Does Simon say, this way?” Yes.
“Then this way.” “Does Simon say,
that way?” Yes. “Then that way.”
“Does Simon say, wig-wag?” Yes.
“Then wig-wag.”

Imitation instead of aspiration ; hence no progress. To make it, we must dare to let our own thoughts come up to the front, and stand to them.

But our thoughts must run along the line of our vocation. Whatever that may be, there is ever a splendid unopened room in front of us. You are most likely to come into it by holding to the bent of your genius ; for you then strike with an eye quickened by love ; with a hand that comes down true to the mark, by practice. The linnet must not attempt to build an oriole's nest.

Your guide is Nature. The closer you cling to this, the more original ; for, as I said, God only can create, and Nature only is the masterpiece of originality. To

the practiced eye, this universe is just like some grand transparency through which the thoughts of God are gleaming. A bird is a materialized conception of the Deity; a bird-song is an idea of his in music; a cloud, in color. Now it may not be that every bird is beautiful, or every song of bird melodious; still there is a type of beauty, there is a grand harmonic key-note running through and through this magnificent scheme of things, on which every form is molded, every tone of music modulated. The closer you bring your eye to this type of beauty, your ear to this leading note of the accordance, the more do you become original. Art springs from Nature. From the acanthus came the Corinthian capital; from the interblending branches of a German forest, the Gothic style of architecture. But the hand that drew the matchless capital from the curling vine, the mitred window from the pendent branches, had its training under

sharp æsthetic law, and in obedience to the eternal type of beauty.

Not, then, the mere copyist of nature, but the copyist under the line of God's own thought, and in accordance with the underlying and eternal type of beauty, is the originator.

The immortal works of Homer, Virgil, Dante, Milton, Shakespeare, Raphael, Michael Angelo, Handel, Haydn, Goethe, Scott and Byron, glow with such conceptions. Here is an instance. I stood some time ago at the beautiful villa of Diodati, on the eastern margin of Lake Lemman, near Geneva, where the last-named poet wrote, in the summer of 1816, the third book of his *Childe Harold*. On my right hand rose the stupendous pinnacles of the Alps, old Mont Blanc heaving its icy head, giant like, above them all. The long black line of the Jura stretched as far as my eye could run upon the left. The lake was sleeping at my feet.

But now upon the north portentous thunder-heads came rolling up over the face of the blue sky, casting sombre shadows on the waters, and brooding, as some vast funereal canopy, over the broad valley. But see ! a flash, a peal, a crash, as from columbiads on a battle-field ! The clouds are all ablaze ; the lake is foaming and the floods are pouring down in torrents. I have not words to paint the scene. But why attempt it ? since the hand of genius, on this very spot, as if under inspiration, wrote :

O night and storm
And darkness, ye are wond'rous strong ;
Yet lovely in your strength, as is the light
Of a dark eye in woman ! Far along
From peak to peak, the rattling crags among
Leaps the live thunder. Not from one lone cloud ;
But every mountain now hath found a tongue ;
And Jura answers from her misty shroud,
Back to the joyous Alps that call to her aloud.

— CHILDE HAROLD, *Canto III.*

The mountains talking to each other in

tones of thunder, their heads gleaming in the quick cross-lightnings! Original, because the grandeur of the scene is grasped. The Alpine echoes are the voices of celestial spirits; and the whole comes to our imagination under the eternal type of BEAUTY.

So the grand idea that the principles of harmony pervade the universe; that the deep-tone ocean sends forth sprays of music all around us and above us to reveal the nearness and the goodness of our God; the grand idea that the golden orbs of light in rolling through their crystal groves sing songs as they course on, to draw our thoughts to the unseen dominions, the Greek and Roman poets had: and yet they did not well express it.* It remained for the immortal Shakespeare, God-beloved, over whom the wings of angels quivered—princely poet of the ages—to touch the key-note of celestial beauty;

* See *Somnium Scipionis*, sections 11 and 12.

to Christianize the thought and make heaven and earth clasp hands in music. He says, the Greek idea in his mind :

How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank !
Here will we sit and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears ; soft stillness and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony.
Sit, Jessica ! Look, how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold !
There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st,
But in his motion, like an angel sings.
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubims :
Such harmony is in immortal souls.
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.

—MERCHANT OF VENICE, *Act V, sc. 1.*

But when the vesture breaks, we shall hear it. Thus he throws hope's sparkling rainbow over life and interblends with all the notes of earth's and heaven's harmonies, sweetly cheering us as we pass through the vales of sadness to the hills of glory. So is he the God-sent poet of hope, of aspiration, and of manliness.

VII.

THOUGH it may be given to but few to rise to such originality, I think it is in the power of each and every one of us, on the line of our vocation, to take some step from the known into the unknown; to touch some spring no other hand has touched; to make some original combination, and thus advance the civilization of mankind. Every little step into that undiscovered realm where thinkers dare to peer, may be a giant's step, leading, as that of Stevensons, unnumbered millions into new possession. Just the notion of a postal card,* a paper bag, a friction match,† a seamless sock makes this world swing on a little easier.

* Dr. Stephaw, a German, invented the postal card, and Austria first adopted it. About seventy countries now use it, and the United States about 250,000,000 annually.

† The brimstone match had long been in use. Mr. Holden first applied phosphorus to the end of a stick, but ignition of the wood did not follow. The happy thought then struck him that he would first coat the end of the stick with brimstone, then apply the phosphorus, and the friction match was invented.

By original combinations, made in closet, cabinet and field, the freedom of our nation is effected. The star of peace now shines serenely over the most magnificent country on the globe. Soon we shall see a higher, nobler, manlier style of life. There are coming grander inventions, sweeter strains of music, mightier sweeps of vision. Thinkers of the present day are rising from the Procrustean bed of error, snapping the bands of mediæval cant and priestly domination, and coming more and more into the light of experimental science and consistent faith.

What marvelous developments as to the industrial and æsthetic arts; what new ideas concerning education, property, God, and final destiny! What brotherly love, what charity, what friendliness, what breaking down of denominational palisades, what uplifting of the millions, if we do our duty, this new century of our government shall see, it has not entered

into the boldest imagination to conceive.

Why should one man have an education and his brother pine away in ignorance? Why should one man occupy a mansion and his brother want a home to shield his cowering family from the pinching cold? Why should one man sip the ruby wine of lazy life, his brother drain the cup of misery to the dregs? These things must and will be rectified. Nature is inexhaustible. There is enough in it for all God's children. Men are coming more and more to see this, and by invention after invention to unroll the treasures. Hence the "golden age" is not, as Mr. Phillips intimates, three thousand years gone by, but, if we stand to duty, just ahead of us. We come to it under the celestial guidance, by originality.

Every one of you, ladies and gentlemen, may, if you will, become original. It is done, as I have said, by thinking patiently, independently, naturally, and aspiring to make this world a better place to live in,

and its people better worthy of the place.

The want for this is not ability, but interest.

"Your horse don't go," said a stranger to a boy whom he saw trying to urge his lazy pacer round an old cider-mill: "what ails him?"

"Nothing ails him," replied the boy, hurling a stone at him to start him forward.

"But he don't go now," continued the man; "what's the matter with him?"

"Nothing's the matter with him," returned the boy; "he ain't interested in the business."

Well, this is the reason why the ponderous crank of civilization turns so slowly. We are not interested in the business. Still, it is encouraging to see that every little effort in the right direction helps the movement, and that the world does not go back upon itself. Even the invention of a

better way to light a fire, or lock a door, or check your horse, or check your temper; to warm your fingers, or to warm your heart, may help to set the world along.

“But what,” some one may ask, “can I do?”

As a farmer, you may, like Mr. Bull of Concord, give us a better grape, or tell us how to utilize ammonia, or how to kill the Colorado beetle, or how to keep the boys from sherry-cobblers.

As a mechanic, you may tell us how to drive an engine with less fuel and less friction. As a physician, you may bury some of your old drugs with the “lost arts,” and give the sick a little better chance to live and liquidate the claims you have against them. As a teacher, you may find some better thing than birch to wake up the genius of that noisy boy in the corner. As a minister, you may put a little more pepper and salt into your sermons. As a lady, you may write, like Mrs. Brown, a vesper

hymn to keep the children still, or teach your liege lord to tie your bonnet-strings more tenderly. That would be one knot gained.

During the year just past, the ladies of this country took out no less than seventy patents for inventions. One was for "a holder for pillow shams." I never could tell what to do with them. Another was a "fish-boner," to save their husbands from being choked to death; and now, if they can invent a machine to keep them at home at night and make them go to church on Sundays, the world will move more easily.

The invention for you yourself to make, lies just in front of you. Too many search afar for the spectacles, when all the while they rest upon the nose.*

* For many centuries the paper-makers formed every individual sheet, however small, of the exact size ordered, bestowing as much labor on a small sheet as a large one, when some person happened to say: "Why not make all sheets large, and then divide them into sizes wanted, and save ten times the labor?" The spectacles were on the nose, and yet it took at least eight centuries to discover them.

This world on which you tread is brimming full of undiscovered wonders.

"I could find enough," said Agassiz, "on the shore of Wenham Pond to busy me for the remainder of my life."

There is gold in the quartz beside your door, and silver in the soil you cultivate. The air you breathe is laden with electric riches, and caloric is a magazine of power and splendor.

Then analyze the pebble-stone; note the action of the acid on the alkali; see how nature makes a fern-leaf; name it. Look into the energy of protoplasm; set to music some sweet bird-song; pass a kind word over to the weary, and your bank-bill over to the needy, and you are helping this bright world to develop its resources and swing forward.

So Humphrey, Hitchcock, Perkins, and other kindred spirits, in this beautiful town fifty years ago—nor have I till to-day since seen it—were endeavoring to

do, and the result is seen, not only in these noble institutions, stately mansions and intelligent society, but also in the educational progress of the State, the country, and the world.

A little spring had lost its way
Amid the grass and fern ;
A passing stranger scooped a well,
Where weary man might turn.

He walled it in and hung, with care,
A ladle at the brink ;
He thought not of the deed he did,
But judged that toil might drink.

He passed again, and lo ! the well,
By summers never dried,
Had cooled ten thousand parching tongues,
And saved a life beside.

A dreamer dropped a random thought,
'Twas old, and yet 'twas new ;
A simple fancy of the brain ;
Yet strong in being true.

It shone upon a genial mind,
And lo! its light became
A lamp of life, a beacon-ray,
A monitory flame.

The thought was small, the issue great,
A watch-fire on the hill;
It sheds its radiance far adown,
And cheers the valley still.

— CHARLES MACKAY.

Such a watch-fire every one of us may set;
and for such service every one of us was
sent into this world.

But does any one of you still say to me,
“I have, sir, no originality?” My reply
is, “You can be good; and that is being
splendidly original.”



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